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ABSTRACT

Westwood Secondary School (Ontario) has integrated two grades of vocational students with regular secondary students in one school. A summary of findings from surveys and student records indicates that students in the vocational program are integrated with the other students to a considerable extent. At least one regular course is being taken by 45 percent of the grade 9 and 74 percent of the grade 10 vocational education students. Participation of vocational students in extracurricular activities is higher than would normally be expected. There are individualized education programs for each student, and the school offers a range of courses comparable to or better than other vocational or secondary schools. It is too early in the development of the model to assess the extent of career orientation programs. Students' attitudes toward the school are a mix of positive and negative. Staff members are satisfied, though not in the areas of discipline and student behavior. Finally, parents indicate a high degree of satisfaction. (MLF)

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Program Committee
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THE PEEL BOARD OF EDUCATION

REPORT RE: EVALUATION OF INTEGRATED MODEL

WESTWOOD SECONDARY SCHOOL

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EA 015 568

EVALUATION OF INTEGRATED MODEL

WESTWOOD SECONDARY SCHOOL

BACKGROUND

The Integrated Model at Westwood Secondary School was approved by the Board upon recommendation of the Program Committee on November 25, 1980. The Westwood program changes were a part of a more general report and series of recommendations concerning accommodation of vocational students in Peel. The report took the position that integrated vocational/secondary schools is needed to be explored as an option in Peel. Westwood Secondary School was chosen for this purpose. It was also recommended that a feasibility study be undertaken regarding a second integrated school in the south east portion of the region.

The report contained a general discussion of program and staffing for the Integrated Model at Westwood. It was noted that the basic goals and philosophy of vocational education would be the same at Westwood as elsewhere in Peel. The need to integrate vocational students "as much as possible into the daily routine and operation of the school" was mentioned. As well, it was considered that the range of courses available in an integrated setting would be more extensive than in a vocational school of comparable enrolment (300-400 students).

The integrated program is being phased in at Westwood Secondary School. In 1981/82, there were about 150 special education students in grade 9 and about 60 special education students in grade 10. In the following years, the program for special education students will be extended through to grade 11 and grade 12. By 1983/84, it is expected that about 30% of the total school enrolment will be special education students.

It should be emphasized that the model is not yet in full operation. In 1981/82, only grade 9 and grade 10 special education students were in the school and therefore, the full impact of the Integrated Model will not be known until the present grade nines complete four years at Westwood S.S.

The evaluation design including copies of the various survey and other instruments, was approved by Management Council in April 1982. Data gathering began immediately after this approval. With the exception of telephone interviews with parents, all data collection was completed by the end of the school year. The parent interviews were conducted in July 1982.

The Evaluation Planning Committee developed 5 questions which it felt were of critical importance in judging the success of the model at Westwood. These 5 questions formed the basis for the evaluation design and the structure of this report. The questions were:

1. To what extent are the special education and regular program students integrated both academically and socially?

2. Is there an individualized program for each student in the school?

3. Is there an adequate range of course offerings for both special education and other students?

4. Has the integrated program resulted in more career orientation and training opportunities for Westwood students?

5. How satisfied are students, staff and parents with the integrated program at Westwood?

RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION

The results of this evaluation, we believe, constitute a valid and reliable assessment of the Integrated Model in its first year of operation at Westwood Secondary School.

In this section, evidence on the 5 evaluation questions is presented. For each question, the data gathered is described and interpreted. It is hoped that the administrative comments will be helpful to the Board.

Question 1 - To what extent are the special education and regular program students integrated, both academically and socially?

In order to determine the actual level of integration of special education and other students, the course enrolment patterns of students were examined. The courses being taken by all special education students and by a random sample of about 90 other students in each of grades 9 and 10 were reviewed.

Almost half (45%) of grade 9 special education students are taking at least one level 4 course (excluding Physical Education). These courses are in the academic, technical, and business areas. The most common out-of-level courses are Mathematics, Drafting, Science and general Technical, but almost all level 4 courses have at least 2 or 3 special education students enrolled. Fifteen students are taking 2 more more major subjects (English, Mathematics, Science or History) at level 4.

Of grade 10 special education students, 74% are taking at least one level 4 course. The most common choices are Geography, Mathematics, Science and History. One quarter of the grade 10 special education students are taking 2 or more courses.

Of the regular program students, a number are enrolled in level 3 courses. About 10% of those sampled in each of grades 9 and 10 are taking English, Mathematics or both at level 3.

Participation of vocational students in extra curricular activities which includes team sports, dramatics, student council, etc. indicates a higher proportion than would normally be expected. This implies that the vocational students are integrating socially quite well with other students.

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A number of courses at Westwood are open to students from both streams. These include Physical Education, Art, Economics, Dramatic Arts and a technical package of courses.

Administrative Comment

In the attached Research Report, statistical data is available regarding the levels of integration mentioned above. The number of students taking out-of-level courses is impressive. It demonstrates the efforts of the school administration to facilitate this opportunity. It helps to ensure that each student is taking a course that is at the appropriate level for him. It clearly demonstrates that while these special education students require most of their academic programs at levels 2 (modified) or 3 (basic), that some students will have strength or special interest in a particular subject area and are therefore able to achieve success at a higher level. It is understood also that some general level students (level 4) may have special difficulty in one subject area and therefore require instruction below the general level. The evaluation demonstrates that this has been possible in 1981/82 at Westwood Secondary School.

The Student Survey dealing with integration was interesting. While the students perceive that there are clear groups or cliques in the school, these divisions are not seen as a problem. High percentages of students indicated that they like most other students at Westwood. The students pointed out that it is easier to switch to a higher level course than to switch down a level. This is seen as a positive comment in the sense that it indicates the desire of the staff to provide a reasonable challenge for each student.

A further index of integration was obtained through examining participation in extra curricular activities. The involvement of special education students in the sample of extra curricular activities is significantly above the proportion of special education students in the school.

The Board should be aware that placement of students in special education programs is done through an Identification, Placement and Review Committee. If a student completes more than half of his program above level 3, then the I.P.R.C. after review of the student's progress and program, and consultation with the parents, would demit the student from the special education designation and the student would no longer be classified as exceptional.

Question 2

Is there an individualized program for each student in the school?

The data provided on course selection indicate a high level of timetable individualization for students at Westwood, especially when they are considered in light of the information on the number of out-of-level courses described earlier. In addition to the opportunity to take out-of-level courses to individualize the programs, it should be remembered that programs are further individualized by a grouping of students within the classrooms.

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Administrative Comment

The evidence indicates that there is a high degree of integration at Westwood both academically and socially. There are, of course, some negative comments by both staff and students but it should be realized that this would be likely true of any school. In some cases, the comments by students are very typical for that age group. For example, it is not unusual for students to indicate that they are unable to talk to teachers about things that upset them. Teenagers find it easier to confide in close friends than they do in teachers, parents or other adults. This view is supported by the survey of schools completed in preparation of the Counselling Report. The Student Survey confirmed that special education students feel they are able to work on subjects at their own speed to a greater degree than the regular students. This, of course, is the emphasis in programming for special education students and is facilitated by the smaller pupil teacher ratio in those classes.

Question 3

Is there an adequate range of course offering for both vocational and other students?

The course outline booklets for 1982/83 of 3 vocational schools and 3 secondary schools were compared in terms of the number of courses offered. Although course codes and organizations differ somewhat from school to school, it is possible to compare the schools in terms of number and range of courses offered. Westwood is shown to offer a larger number of courses than the schools to which it was compared. This is a reflection of more levels of courses offered at Westwood. Taken as a whole, the data indicate that Westwood has a range of courses comparable to or better than those of other vocational or secondary schools. It is important to remember that the Westwood integrated program will not be in full operation for another 2 years.

Administrative Comment

In the interviews with Department Heads, several Heads mentioned the lack of resources for programming for level 3 students. It is true that there is a shortage of texts and fully developed courses for these students across the province, not just at Westwood. Because the Ministry of Education Guidelines have not provided sufficient direction in this area, it has been necessary for The Peel Board of Education to develop its own programs. The Program Department has already made a start and programs in Canadian Studies, Mathematics, English, Science, Physical and Health Education and Family Studies have been developed for level 3 students. Work is proceeding in other subject areas as well.

Westwood offers a range of level 4 courses that is unique in Peel County. In programs such as Cosmetology and Food Services, all pupils have the opportunity to enrol in courses previously reserved for special education pupils. These options have proved very popular and offer a new range of job preparation programs.

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In summary, students generally feel that there is a comprehensive range of courses for them. However, staff members have concerns about current course offerings in terms of the changes which are being made and have still to be made in curriculum, teaching methods and the like. The administration understands these concerns and is addressing them through the development of courses of student and inservice programs.

Question 4

Has the Integrated Model resulted in more career orientation and training opportunities for Westwood students?

Career orientation and training opportunities in most secondary schools are diversified. They range from courses offered by Counselling Departments through programs such as Co-operative Education and work experience, through less formal activities such as career days to individual students seeking information from a staff member. Thus to develop a comparison of career related programming at Westwood, with other schools, is very difficult at this time.

Administrative Comment

A large proportion of such activity occurs in the senior grades. Westwood does not yet have vocational programs in the senior grades. The results then must be seen as tentative and subject to further review in ? years when the Westwood model is fully operational.

In the 1982/83 school year, when the first full special education class reaches grade 10, a course in job/life skills will be strongly recommended for all pupils.

Question 5

How satisfied are students, staff and parents with the Westwood program?

The Integrated Model has had a major impact on teachers, but does not appear to have reduced staff satisfaction levels in most areas. In general, teachers consider the program to be reasonably successful so far. However, there are some teachers who have reservations about some aspects of the Integrated Model.

Some student factors such as attendance and drop-outs are easily measured. The daily attendance and drop-out rates compare favourably to the other sample secondary schools and better than the segregated vocational schools (see figures 14 and 15 of Researcher's Report).

Staff satisfaction levels are charted in figure 10 of the Researcher's Report. In 6 of 8 sub-sections, the levels of response indicated that 70% or more of the staff were "as satisfied or more satisfied" than last year. The two sub-sections in which the responses were more negative than positive are those relating to discipline and student behaviour. Only a small portion of the staff expresses satisfaction in these areas. However, Department Heads expressed a different perspective with approximately two-thirds of them indicating that the Integrated Model had not created additional discipline problems. The remainder felt that discipline was now more work.

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Asked to rate the success of the Integrated Model, over half the staff were very positive in the response, with only ne in five teachers indicating a lack of success.

Student responses are similarly contradictory. 63% of the students indicated they feel good about being a student at Westwood; student opinion was evenly split on questions of liking to attend Westwood and of being treated fairly; while only small percentages feel that most students like or care about Westwood School.

To the contrary, parental attitudes (shown in table 12 of Researcher's Report) are very positive respecting all areas questioned; course offerings, individualization, career preparation, information and integration. The Integrated Model is obviously receiving approval of parents.

Administrative Comment

The implementation of the Integrated Model is a very significant change and has been more difficult for some teachers. Teacher comments seem to indicate that they have found that student interactions are more demanding. However, as some indicated, working harder is not necessarily bad.

The student data are difficult to interpret because similar information is not available from other schools; therefore, comparisons are impossible. As indicated before, it is believed that some of the comments are typical of students of that age level and further that while staff have worked hard at developing positive student attitudes, there is a limit as to what can be achieved in a few months. The administration and staff at Westwood are working to understand and improve student attitudes.

What is particularly significant is the strong support and indications of satisfaction that were received from parents. Parents were particularly positive with regard to the integration in total but especially with regard to course offerings and the efforts to individualize programs.

THE MALTON PLAN

One of the peculiarities of the Westwood Model is that integration is coincidental with the larger Malton Plan involving co-operative programming between the two schools and the move of grade 13 students to Morning Star Secondary School. Some teachers and Department Heads raised the Malton Plan as a source of concern. This may be because some teachers look forward to teaching senior level 5 students. Some departments may be adversely affected. Some senior students expressed concern and disappointment at having to transfer to Morning Star Secondary School for their grade thirteen year.

Although comments regarding the Malton Plan did surface in the evaluation of the Westwood Integrated Model, efforts have been made not to confuse the issues. This report, therefore, has attempted to focus solely on the Westwood Integrated Model.

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CONCLUSIONS

This report has provided a considerable amount of data about many aspects of the program at Westwood Secondary School. Some conclusions and recommendations are made concerning the major issues which arise from the report.

Two general comments about the change at Westwood can be made. Any major change means more work, and this is so at Westwood. It can be expected that, when what is now new and different becomes routine and established, some of the concerns will disappear. Secondly, any change brings opposition and this too is true at Westwood. Some staff members do not like the Integrated Model. While every effort will be made to respond to staff and student concerns, no school program will ever satisfy everybody. There has been and will continue to be opportunity for staff members who are not supportive of the Integrated Model to transfer to another secondary school in Peel.

The report indicates that many of the major aspects of the Integrated Model have been implemented successfully at Westwood. Students have a program available which is comparable to those in other secondary and vocational schools but with the added advantage of the ability to take courses at several levels. Students at various levels seem to get along well in the school. There is considerable evidence of individualized programming.

There are reasonable degrees of satisfaction with the model among staff and students and strong support by parents. Much can be learned from the Westwood experience but much would also be different in another setting.

It is clear from this study that staff and administrative commitment has been a key factor in the success of this Integrated Model. It will be important to continue to provide ongoing and meaningful staff development opportunities in such areas as program development, teaching methods, student relations and so on. There is a need to provide additional assistance to the staff as they move toward additional level 2 and 3 courses. Every effort will be made to provide support to the school in this program development over the next 2 or 3 years. Resources from the Special Services Department and the Program Department will be employed to assist Westwood staff in working with this large group of special education students.

The results of this evaluation, we believe, constitute a valid and reliable assessment of the Integrated Model in its first year of operation at Westwood Secondary School.

During this developmental phase, there will be a regular review of the model so that concerns can be identified and dealt with as they emerge. Several concerns have been identified in this report which will serve as a starting point for further planning.

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SUMMARY

In summary, we should examine the answers to the 5 questions asked in this survey.

1. To what extent are students integrated academically and socially?

   The extent of integration this first year exceeds the expectations. Students are involved extra-curricularly, and they are taking courses in various levels of difficulties.

2. Is there an individualized program for each student?

   Yes, in terms of both time-table options and of in-classroom instruction.

3. Is there an adequate range of course offerings?

   Yes, Westwood provides a range comparable to both regular secondary schools and to vocational schools. We must remember that senior grade specialization has not yet been experienced. Westwood's lack of some specialized facilities may be offset by the availability of regular academic course offerings.

4. Has the Integrated Model resulted in more career orientation and training opportunities?

   We do not know, as it is too early to tell in the history of the Integrated Model.

5. How satisfied are students, staff and parents?

   Daily attendance and drop out rates after one year reflect student satisfaction. However, students do provide confusing data with respect to pleasure in attending Westwood, and the "caring" they identify in others within the school. We don't know whether similar confusion would be found in other school populations as well.

   Staff appear to be satisfied in all areas except those of discipline and student behaviour. They find it harder to maintain desired standards in an Integrated Model. Some staff are finding it difficult to consider the model a success after one year.

   Parents are very positive in stating that integration is successful to this stage.

   Responses to the five questions seem to be indicating progress in the right direction. Some areas need attention, and future years may disclose other information.